

Might dementia sufferers benefit from CBD?

Rather than a disease, dementia is a group of conditions where brain function is impaired. It is thought that it will affect a million people in the United Kingdom by 2025. It affected an estimated seven million-plus people in the United States in 2020. It can affect people of any age but is more common in over-65s.



Dementia is more common in over-65s. Photo: Stephenie Young Merzel

Problems in at least two important brain functions make for a determination of dementia. These are hallucinations, handling complex tasks, memory loss, motor functions and co-ordination, personality changes and reasoning.

There have been no sizeable clinical trials examining the effect of [CBD](#) on people who suffer from dementia. But people with dementia could benefit from CBD. This is because it lessens inflammation and oxygen build-up, stimulates the brain and eliminates dead brain cells. It also reduces anxiety. There have been some promising indications.

There was a [study of mice in Strylia in 2011](#). It indicated that CBD prevented or even reversed the development of cognitive deficits.

Another [study of mice](#) took place in Georgia in the United States in 2021. In this, rodents with Alzheimer's disease were regularly injected with CBD. The scientists noticed a marked improvement in the mice's ability to think. They could better tell the difference between old and new objects. Their movement also improved; stiffness often accompanies Alzheimer's.

The [US National Institute of Health](#) undertook a study of people and animals in 2016. In it, CBD stimulated blood flow to the brain.

Again in 2016, a study at [the University of Madrid](#) saw 24 people given a combination of THC and CBD. This was effective in managing Huntington's disease, a major form of dementia. A significant drawback of this was the inclusion of THC. This entails that it doesn't confirm that people with dementia benefit from CBD alone.

There was a [systematic review in 2019](#). It found that the condition of people given CBD and its intoxicating relative, THC, improved. These improvements included decreased vomiting; less neuropsychiatric symptoms, like agitation, irritability and screaming; and requiring less painkillers,

[Another review, this time in 2021](#), occurred. It found CBD to be beneficial in the cases of Parkinson's and Huntington's disease, but not necessarily dementia.

In one [study of 17 Greek dementia sufferers in 2022](#), drops of 3% CBD were given. Behaviour and psychological symptoms in around two thirds of participants improved. Once more, some THC was also given.

[There was a study of 19 care home residents in Geneva with severe dementia in 2022](#). The participants received THC and CBD in a ratio of 1:2. They also took an average of seven other drugs. The study lasted for 13 months, while all other studies of cannabinoids and dementia lasted no more than six weeks. There was “a marked improvement that was stable over time” in behavioural troubles and rigidity.

The [Eastern Virginia Medical School](#) conducted a clinical trial. This examined the link between CBD and dementia. It was due to conclude in 2023, but there's no mention of its results online. Specifically, it looked at changes in agitation and aggression, cognitive skills, neuropsychiatric symptoms, quality of life for both sufferers and their caregivers and sleep quantity.

All in all, it appears as if CBD relieves dementia. But there is a requirement for larger scale studies that don't also use THC.